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ABSTRACT

The Seattle Art Museum's (SAM's) My Art Gallery Web site was born out of an actual experiment in the galleries of the museum itself. The project was called "Growing Up With Art" and was funded by a four-year grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts. SAM invited sixth-grade classes from local schools into the museum to curate two exhibitions using the museum's permanent collection. It was a project requiring collaboration from many corners of the institution--curators, educators, and registrars--as well as teachers and students in the public schools. Achieving an actual exhibition in the museum's galleries after only a ten-week lesson was an ambitious goal. Educators and a curatorial associate developed lessons for the students that would take them step by step through a "curatorial process." This process was designed to incorporate key elements of a curator's exhibition-development process and to tie into a sixth-grade curriculum as well as Washington State learning objectives. This paper explores the transformation of classroom curriculum into an engaging, Web-friendly, interactive experience, pointing out the Web-management and structural-design challenges that were faced to achieve this goal. Similar to the program that resulted in the physical exhibitions, the Web site project was ambitious; it required museum staff to work collaboratively and face new issues that were pushed to the forefront by this medium. Includes 11 illustrations. (Author/AEF)

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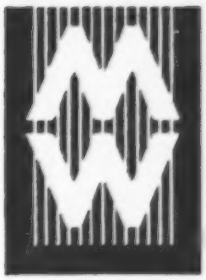

PAPERS
Museums and the Web 2001

Bringing The Curatorial Process To The Web

Carrie Adams, Traci Cole, Christina DePaolo, Susan Edwards, Seattle Art Museum, USA

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Abstract

The Seattle Art Museum's *My Art Gallery* Web site was born out of an actual experiment in the galleries of the museum itself. The project was called "Growing Up With Art" and was funded by a four-year grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts. SAM invited sixth-grade classes from local schools into the museum to curate two exhibitions using the museum's permanent collection. It was a project requiring collaboration from many corners of the institution--curators, educators, and registrars--as well as teachers and students in the public schools. Achieving an actual exhibition in the museum's galleries after only a ten-week lesson was an ambitious goal. Educators and a curatorial associate developed lessons for the students that would take them step by step through a "curatorial process." This process was designed to incorporate key elements of a curator's exhibition-development process and to tie into a sixth-grade curriculum as well as Washington State learning objectives.

The very nature of this project was clearly experimental and brought up many issues within the museum about the display of art and the role of the museum in relation to its community. Because of the intense time commitment and expense required for the project, the museum was able to give this experience to only a limited group of sixth-grade students. Not wanting to retire our efforts to the archives, we turned to the Internet as a way to extend a version of the unique experience to a wider audience.

As the project was winding down, SAM had completed the transfer of its object collection data to a new system, allowing the data to be accessed through the Web. Using the Web to engage our audience with the permanent collection became a new possibility. The idea was to build a Web site where students could be introduced to the elements of the curatorial process online: a process of visual analysis that includes observation, questioning, research, comparison, and label writing. Students, specifically in grades 6-10, could create a virtual exhibition by choosing from the group of works used in the actual student-curated exhibition and writing the results of their research and observations into a database-driven notebook. The notes and images would then dynamically generate html pages displaying their work. As a reward, students could pick their own gallery backdrops for their exhibition and send "gallery opening" emails to friends and family.

This paper will explore the transformation of classroom curriculum into an engaging, Web-friendly, interactive experience, pointing out the Web-management and structural-design challenges that were faced to achieve this goal. Similar to the program that resulted in the physical exhibitions, the Web site

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project was ambitious; it required museum staff to work collaboratively and face new issues that were pushed to the forefront by this medium.

Introduction

Using the Web to teach the complexities of curating an art museum exhibition, with the goal of having the user complete the process in twenty minutes, is no small feat. Yet perhaps giving the user a *sense* of the complexities involved, from research and visual analysis to design and writing, is possible. The Seattle Art Museum developed an interactive site that allows users to interact with the museum's permanent collection in a new way and create their own online exhibition, thereby beginning to grasp the knowledge and experience required of today's museum curators.

My Art Gallery is a Web site that was developed out of a four-year grant entitled *Growing Up with Art* (see Appendix A for granting information), which brought local sixth-graders into the Seattle Art Museum to co-curate two actual exhibitions using objects from our permanent collection. In ten one-totwo-hour lessons in their classrooms, museum staff taught the sixth-graders a simplified version of the curatorial process. It was an ambitious pedagogical program for the sixth grade, introducing the students to visual analysis, research, comparison, developing interpretations, and writing explanatory labels, all within a period of six months. A central goal of the project was to find new ways to present the museum's permanent collection and improve how the public interacts with it. Another important goal was to foster collaboration both within the museum and without, working with museum departments, teachers, and students.

After the exhibitions were installed, the question remained of how to maintain the relationships forged between the public schools, the teachers, the students, and the museum, and how to use what was learned from the project to help future users engage with the permanent collection. These exhibitions were intense administrative feats made possible by a large grant and will not likely become part of the museum's regular program due to limited funding, time, and resources. In addition, though the project was a great experience for about one hundred students, we wanted to find a way to expand our reach. Thus, three years into the four-year grant, the curatorial associate involved in the project approached the Web team with an idea to transfer the curatorial process that the students underwent in the classroom on to the Web, allowing the lessons developed for the project to live beyond the grant period. It was an ambitious idea--to create a highly interactive learning environment on the Web modeled on ten classroom lessons. The site would give any users a glimpse into the world of an art museum curator and give them their own virtual "gallery" where they would choose a work of art, research it, and develop their own interpretations.

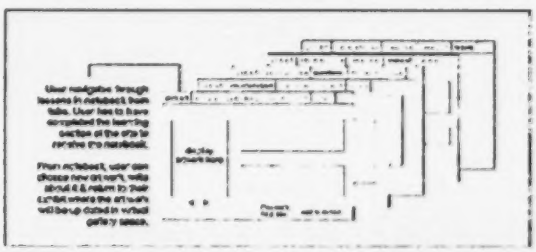
Many of the goals for the exhibitions were carried through to the Web site, though they sometimes manifested themselves in new incarnations. From the beginning, the project to create student exhibitions was envisioned as a cross-cultural one because the Seattle Art Museum's collection includes works of art from North and South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia, with particular strengths in Chinese, Japanese, African, and Northwest Coast Native American art. Development of the Web site also corresponded with the launch of our online collection database, which is accessible through the museum Web site. *My Art Gallery* would

provide a structured environment in which a user of the Seattle Art Museum site could explore a portion of the permanent collection online.

In addition, the cross-cultural comparisons and themes chosen for the exhibitions came from the students' own impressions of the world around them. We hoped this approach to the exhibitions and the Web site would help to make a connection between our collection and our users' personal experiences. Finally, the Web site allowed us to continue collaboration and outreach efforts into the future by marketing the site to teachers and allowing users to experiment with our permanent collection. Theoretically, the expense and risk involved in pursuing such experimental projects in the physical space of the museum is reduced on the Web. The assumption was that the Web is more flexible and forgiving, and therefore a perfect place for the eclectic and experimental nature of these exhibitions.

The process of developing this site was complicated, especially for a Web team of three developers (graphic designer, programmer, and manager) and one content provider (curatorial associate). What made this project such a challenge was transforming a model for teaching students in a structured classroom setting into a free-for-all Web environment. The existing process for the museum's Web site development presented a great stumbling block for this type of project--we had simply never attempted such an interactive, process-oriented Web site before. We knew we needed to build a site where graphics, images, and rollovers were used to create an interactive learning experience that would engage our users and take them through the process. Users needed to learn on the Web from doing, and the site needed to give them all the tools necessary to do this without supervision.

The idea of developing a "notebook," a place where students would do their own work and start creating their own exhibition, was essential to early site development. A vehicle was needed for students to select art images from the collection and write notes about their selections. A database had to be developed where "notebook" images and text could be saved and retrieved to create the content for the individual online exhibitions. It needed to be both a programming tool and a learning tool, giving users ownership of their process.



Initial notebook concept

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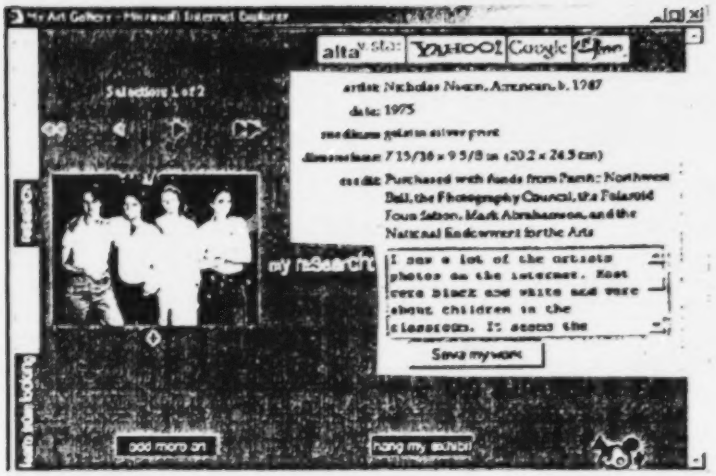
alta vista
YAHOO!
Google
my research
I saw a lot of the artists photos on the internet. Most were black and white and were about children in the classroom. It seems the
Save my work
add more on
hang my exhibit

Final notebook

One early realization was that if we didn't engage our users immediately in the learning process, we would lose them. We also couldn't assume students would know who a curator is or what one does. So the first task was to introduce the idea of a curator in a fun and interesting way. Once we knew how to accomplish that, we could roll up our sleeves and build the remainder of the site.

Some of the questions we needed to answer included, How do you get students to think about looking at art online? How can we get them to leave the site to research the work of art they chose and then come back to the site? What happens if they go to a search engine and can't find any information? Finally, how do we make them feel rewarded for completing the process of building their own exhibition?

It took several months of meeting, developing flow charts, drafting text, and building models to come up with a design solution to the "questions" the site posed. The key challenge was coming up with an interface design that combined all the components into one dynamic learning experience. Everything on the site had to work together. We needed to simplify a very complex set of ideas. We knew this thorough development process was necessary to avoid the pitfalls before us--possibly building a site where the components competed with each other, lacked focus, and were confusing to the user.

Throughout the months of the production process, we constantly had to redefine and lock in our established goals. This was necessary for two reasons. First, the site kept evolving and changing as we worked; we needed to produce one section of the site in order to understand how to build the next. We weren't always sure of the end result, so revisiting our goals kept us focused and on the right path. Second, each person working on the project contributed distinct expertise and brought a particular perspective to the project. This dynamic intensified when staff members from several different departments were pulled into the project at various stages of development. It took a lot of negotiating and working together to pool the necessary skills into a shared vision for the site. Unlike a traditional museum project with a clear beginning, middle, and end and clearly defined staff roles, the site development was much more

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dynamic and cyclical.

Over a year and a half, we worked through a process of constant redesign and rewrites of text and code. We developed new models for management, as well as site structure, design, and content. The evolution of our process grew out of the lesson we were learning about the Web: that it is a unique environment where complex concepts can become lucid in a way that is not possible in the classroom or in the gallery.

Simple Structures for a Complex Project

As various museum staff members contributed and developed content, the Web team found it necessary to establish content-organization tools which would be used both to guide the project along in a focused fashion and to guide the user along within the Web site itself. A main challenge was to restructure the original goals and materials for the actual exhibition process into content suitable for the Web environment. In order to simplify both the management of the project and the structure of the site, the Web team developed a clear mission statement and defined the target audience. Then, the graphic designer developed a storyboard, using it as a tool to create one interface to integrate all the components of the site: the introduction, the curatorial lessons, the notebook idea, and the ability for users to create their own exhibition site. Crucial to this storyboard process was the development of an illustrated character (and eventually the development of two characters) to guide and motivate the user through the site.

A Focused Mission Statement Creates a Focused Web Experience

Defining a target audience is key in the early stages of developing a Web site, as it can often lead to the success of a site. It may be necessary to elaborate on the definition of the target audience and outline the kind of experience they should have. This can be called a "mission statement," where the target audience demographics and goals for their experience are melded into a clear statement.

Choosing a target audience for the site became an essential tool for focusing the content during early development of the site. Not only did we need a good solid understanding of the audience, but we also needed to understand how this group uses the Web. The target audience for the Web site differs in many ways from the students who participated in the physical exhibition project. One difference is that Web users can abandon the process any time they want by clicking out of the site. Another difference is that they can't ask questions or have direct dialogue with a teacher if they have difficulty understanding a step in the curatorial process. Within the Web site, the users are on their own and in control of their experience.

These limitations challenged us to further streamline the content and take several approaches that departed from the classroom experience. Initially, we assumed our target audience would be the same demographic as the students, with the exception that the target age would be expanded, focusing on grades six through ten. As we proceeded further into the Web project, it became clear that, along with retrofitting the content, we would need to create a focused "mission

statement," outlining the kind of experience we wanted the user to have.

For example, we decided that the Web experience needed to be completed within a shorter period of time than originally planned. We initially thought of the notebook as a tool the users could save their work in and then log back into if they wanted to take a break. They could log in upon return and continue where they had left off in the process. On further thought, we realized that this kind of open-ended learning experience could result in confusion. Allowing the user the freedom to break the flow of learning could come at the cost of losing them all together. As a result, we decided to create a two-part Web experience.

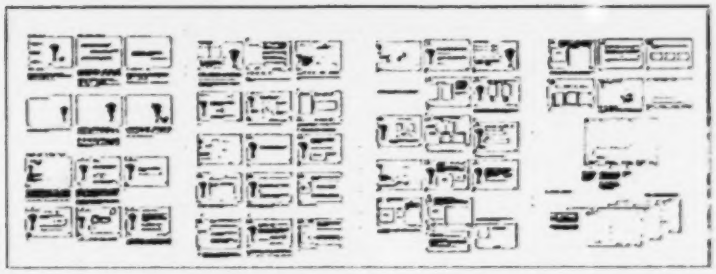
The first portion of the site would be dedicated to introducing the users to the curatorial process, having them participate in five "lessons" as they went along. On the Web the five lessons are called learn from looking, asking questions, research, compare, and interpret. Only after the learning occurred and their online exhibit was posted did we give them free rein to work within their notebook and choose additional works of art. The mission statement was our saviour in many regards, as it helped us clarify the user goals and focus on creating a more organized Web experience. We would often refer to the mission statement as a focal point as we continued to develop the site.

Storyboards: Streamlining Content into a Web Experience Conducive to Learning

Storyboarding can be helpful if there is a lot of content to organize but design is not yet developed. The storyboards we created helped to approximate the number of pages the content would require and how much text and graphics might go on each page. Simply presenting a masked-out visual representation of each page helped the team easily grasp whether our ideas and content were working.

Originally, content for *My Art Gallery* came from various worksheets, diagrams, and notes from educators who participated in the physical experience. This content was useful in the physical experience, as it promoted two-way interaction with the students and educators. The lesson tools could be used to explain complex concepts and generate discussion. Working with this content, however, the Web team found the Web site was developing into an unfocused experience for our users. Based on the original content, many of the five lesson components repeated concepts, provided too many options, and offered intricate cross-references to other lesson components. We realized that the original content and ideas generated for the site were impossible to fit into a restricted Web environment.

As a result we prioritized content, focusing on the material crucial to understanding the curatorial process. Content was streamlined into a straightforward learning approach that would work on the Web. Other ideas and components that were interesting but did not fit into this approach were discarded. The storyboard we developed illustrated to all non-Web team staff how the original content needed to be streamlined for the web. It gave everyone working on the project a visual guide that became the framework from which all content and ideas were generated.



Storyboard

Mona, A Hip 'Learning Tool' for Kids

During the first project meetings we brainstormed the idea of having a guide to take users through the lessons. The graphic designer developed an illustrated character who would act as an anchor point within the site, add personal interest, and work with the content in a way that our target audience could relate to.

Mona

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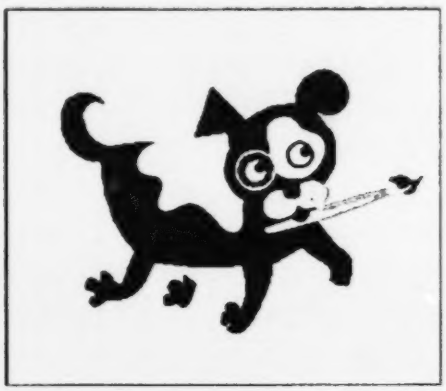
We felt it was important that the character be a compelling peer who goes through the curatorial process on a level similar to our users, but also explains the concepts and lessons as they proceed through the site. The character developed was first called "Annie Art" but she was eventually christened "Mona." Used as a main tool for organizing the content, she became the backbone around which we worked the other elements.

Through her positioning, and the use of dialogue (called "bubble text") and rollovers, Mona operated interactively with the users, providing a context for the content and accommodating different learning styles. Some users have found they read Mona's bubble text while others find they learn better relying solely on the visuals.

Mona with bubble text

In addition to Mona, we developed a second character, her dog Pablo, to keep students motivated, guide them through help screens, and chart their progress throughout the site. Pablo became the icon giving a consistent presence to the help function.



Pablo

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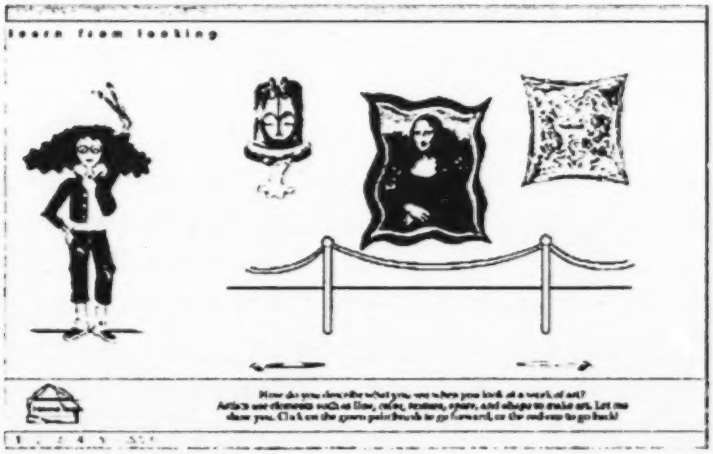
Help box icon

Evolution of the Character and Script

The original text for the Web followed the course of the lesson plans despite the fact that in the classroom the lessons were presented for one to two hours over a period of ten weeks. The resulting text was cumbersome, repetitive, and dry. Part of the problem was lack of experience. The curatorial associate who helped write the original lessons and taught them in the classroom was also writing the copy for the site. Her task was formidable; she had to write for a format she had little experience working with and for an interactive framework that did not yet exist. Likewise, the Web team understood the technical and design possibilities of the Web, but did not have the experience of creating an exhibition with the students, nor were they experts on the curatorial process. Clearly, the linear model that worked on simpler site projects "first copy, then design, then post" was not going to work here.

Initially, we felt that Mona would appear intermittently throughout the Web site, appearing only when necessary to add visual focus and help explain a complex lesson. As the lesson sections were laid out graphically with the first draft of text, it became apparent that the text and our character seemed disjointed. In fact, in early testing, our user was not reading the text at all. This was partially a design issue, but the illustrative examples that came out of the classroom were detracting from the visual and interactive nature of the Web experience.



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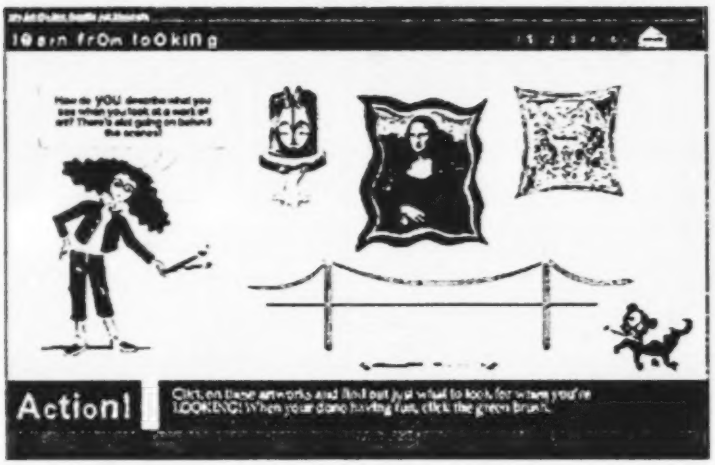
Round 1 Design: Mona with no "bubble" text - lesson text at bottom

During the next redesign Mona became the unifying structure for the site, and text was streamlined to work with her. We added a text bubble above her head and drastically cut the script to fit comfortably within it. We were able to move much of the longer explanatory text into Pablo's help screens, assuming that those who needed this extra information would seek it out. Finally, text that did not have a direct visual relationship to what was going on in that page was eliminated.

Placing all of the instructional text in Mona's bubble intensified the interactive quality that she now embodied. As users rolled over the various interactives, Mona's position and bubble text changed accordingly. A once static page was now full of action.



Final Design: Lesson text integrated with Mona

With Mona and Pablo established as our tour guides, the text for the site shifted from a descriptive lecture into a narrative dialogue. The curatorial associate and Web manager had many two-hour writing sessions that were more like drama workshops. The graphic designer also rewrote much of Mona's text; perhaps because the design is so central to a site of this nature, she clearly understood what Mona should say.

Much of the narrative couldn't be written until the basic design of each section of the site had been sketched out. We needed an idea of what Mona would be doing and how the user to the site would be interacting with her before we could write carefully focused text. This back-and-forth exchange between design and copy writing allowed us to make use of the unique abilities of the Web to illustrate complex ideas (especially visual ones), and to streamline the text as we went. As the programmer noted, there was one point where she realized that one rollover allowed us to get rid of a whole page of text.

Project staff had decided to write Mona in the youth vernacular in order to appeal to the target audience. We did not want her to "talk down" to the user but be an equal, someone they could feel comfortable with when learning about the complexities of art. Internally there was some concern about this language. We wondered if using words such as

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"dude" and "rock on" could potentially alienate the students and trivialize the process. We were sensitive to the fact that, as writers, we are much older than our target audience. We didn't want to assume we knew what would work for them. We also didn't want the site to become out of date by using trendy language.

Testing Our Audience

During the writing process we struggled to keep our users in mind. We realized that we were really working in the dark and were plagued by the question, "Will kids really do this?" The next step was to have both students and teachers review our materials to let us know if we were on the right track. It was important to get feedback on what we were building and also to get a sense of whether or not our target audience would be interested in using the site.

Through informal testing we evaluated the site with three different groups of users that we knew would be invaluable to our development process: teacher consultants, students in the target age group, and museum staff. The graphic designer created two questionnaires --one for the students and one for the teachers. She also created design boards featuring Mona and Pablo, the site layout, and text. We scheduled several one-hour testing sessions and recorded them. These sessions kept us focused on the needs of our user throughout the rest of the development process.

What we found is that each student and teacher had contrasting opinions of the Web, based on both level of interest and access to technology resources. Regardless, each person responded with genuine interest in learning what a curator does and in building their own exhibition site on the Web. In fact, everyone seemed excited and interested in the concepts of the site and the direction it was going. Reaction to the character illustrations was positive, as was reaction to the text.

Teachers were among the first testers of the site. They encouraged a youth-oriented dialogue and alleviated our initial concerns about the text. This core group of teachers became vital consultants whose feedback proved invaluable throughout the development of the site. Because much of the site's content had to be reshaped from the original classroom lessons for the web, we also wanted to verify that the content was still solid from a pedagogical point of view. We also got their advice on the logistics and feasibility of using an interactive Web site in a classroom. The teachers supported our decision to make the site a personalized process for the students, pointing out that the tools to let them pick their own works of art and write their own notes were important motivators.

As part of the testing process, we also interviewed a group of middle school students. We were curious to see how they would respond to Mona and the language in the script, as well as what interest they would have in creating an art exhibition online. The graphics and text were generally well received, with requests from various students to "tone down" the use of the vernacular. We learned that they mainly use sites targeted to adults, feeling strongly that education sites developed for their age group were "cookie cutter" and that the language used was often "too cute." They encouraged us to create a Web site that gave them the ability to make choices and trusted their intelligence.

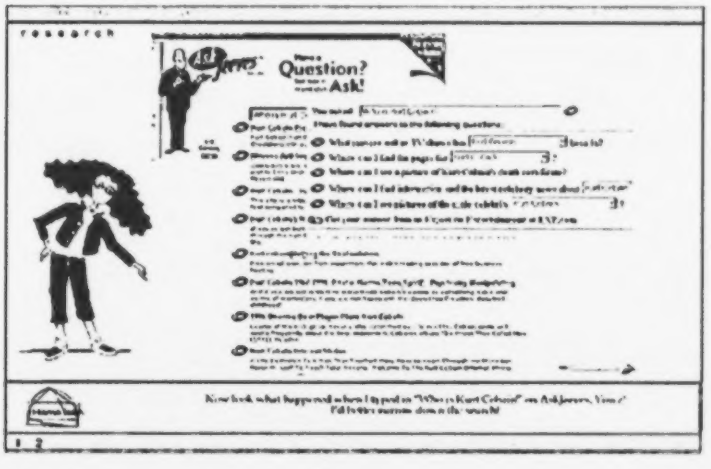
It was important to schedule constant review into the many phases of the production process. Project staff , often consisting of more that the central group of four, had long review meetings going over each page of the site both during the initial design and throughout the various redesign phases. We asked other museum staff to walk through the site at several key points during production. These feedback sessions were instrumental in fine-tuning the flow and troubleshooting technical problems.

Redesigning the Curatorial Process Online

A good illustration of the development process for *My Art Gallery* is the evolution of the research lesson design, which was the most challenging to build. This section needed redesigning three times, managed to dodge several deadlines, and caused widespread panic among the Web team. The problem with this section was threefold: 1.) We invited our users to leave our site to conduct research; 2.) We couldn't assume they knew how to do this; and 3.)We had to acknowledge that researching works of art could be an ambiguous and open-ended process.

When we decided to encourage users to leave the site and use search engines, we feared we would lose them. We worried that there would not be enough incentive for them to return to our site even if we used all the limited programming tools available to make coming back effortless. As a result of our concern, Pablo was engineered to eagerly await their return to the site.

Another concern was how to explain the complex process of conducting research online. Similar to how we first approached the original text, we started with classroom technique and tried to model the process by example. We took screen shots of some popular search engine sites that Mona "used" to research the work of art she chose, hoping visuals would effectively explain how to use search engines to some one who may have never done it. However, we had problems securing permission from several of the search engines to capture screen shots, so we had to abandon this first design concept.



Round 1 Design: Research section with search engine screen shots

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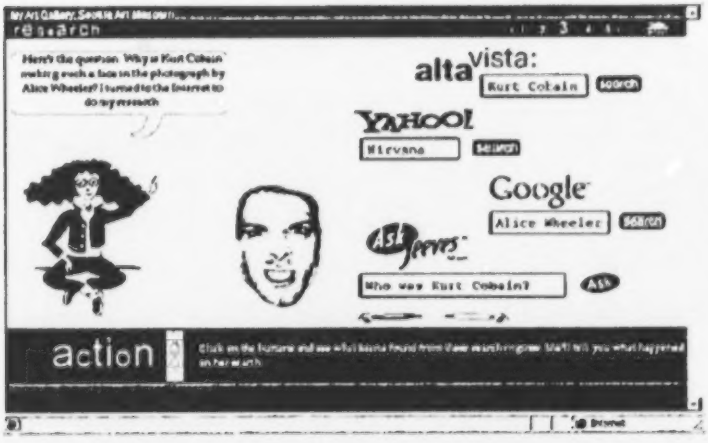
This turned out to be a mixed blessing. We were trying to balance the need to guide novice researchers while providing a more streamlined presentation that would not bore those with more online experience. In the end, we broke with the narrative script and replaced it with a central research portal.



Final Design: Research section with search engine logo portal

Using various search engine logos, users can link to several examples of search results and explore them in detail if they wish, before moving on to do their own research. This simple design provides a needed structure without being too didactic.

Research is a vital step to the curatorial process, including understanding that there isn't necessarily one right answer to a question raised. Sometimes finding an answer at all can be challenging, especially for some of our collection's works that the students can chose from. To prepare for this eventuality, we used Mona to explain that there can be many different opinions about one work of art, and they are not necessarily right or wrong. She lets the user know that it is ok if they can't find specific information about a chosen work of art. Mona selects a photograph as an example, but fails to find explicit details about it. However, after more research, she finds information about the photographer and the subject of the photo, allowing her to hypothesize what the answer to her question might be.

Realistically, our concerns about this section could not be dispelled easily since the actual process of research is, in and of itself, inconclusive at times. There was also little we could do other than hope the site was compelling enough to draw users back in to finish their exhibit.

Use

During our testing phase we asked the teachers what they thought the best way to market the Web site to Seattle-area educators would be. Each teacher said an attractive postcard would stand out among the multitude of solicitations they receive. Our Web designer produced a postcard that was mailed in conjunction with the launch of the site in September 2000. We used our own mailing list of Puget Sound-area

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schools and education-related institutions that represented our target audience. Our press department also sent out a release that generated national coverage in education and art-related publications.

The postcard mailing was very successful in reaching a local audience, and several area teachers have integrated the site into their curriculum. Some teachers have contacted us to discuss the site and provided informative feedback. Most reviews have been favorable, but we ran into an unforeseen roadblock: notebook identification. Following protocol adopted by other Web sites, we had chosen the users' email addresses as the unique identifier for the notebooks. This identifier has the advantage of allowing us to email forgotten passwords to users--important in ensuring continued use of the site. However, we learned that many students do not have their own email addresses. In one instance, a resourceful teacher allowed her students to use her email address; unfortunately, this meant that all the students were actually writing to the same notebook, resulting in quite a mess. In other instances, the students mistyped their email address in the initial setup, rendering their notebook inaccessible when returning to the site. The programmer and Web manager worked with affected teachers to come up with short-term solutions so their students could continue to work on the site.

Many of the teachers who contacted us did so specifically to discuss technical difficulties, but this also gave us the opportunity to interview them to understand how the site was being used. It is interesting to highlight one teacher's experience with the site. She had an ongoing discussion with her students about attitudes toward works of art. Her students argued that all artworks could be judged equally, that merely by being art they were "all the same." She wanted to find a way to prove to them that works of art are held up to standards and that each work of art had to be understood within its own context. After receiving our postcard, she thought the *My Art Gallery* Web site would be a good tool to use to prove her point. Along with using the site, she also required the students to hand in a paper. She did feel that the students' assumptions about art were being tested as a result of using the site. Through their exploration of the five interactive lessons, they were discovering the complexities involved in researching art. As a result, they had many questions about the works they chose, and some students came to her for guidance when they could not find adequate research to explain them. This feedback supported our initial fears about developing the research section. However, with this teacher's guidance, the students did not give up and learned a valuable lesson about the process of research itself and also the intricacies of researching two very different works of art.

Another indication of use is the online exhibitions that are created after the users go through the lessons. As of this publication, 254 users have logged on and 64 exhibitions have been created. Many of the exhibitions submitted are similar; the majority include two works of art and one paragraph describing and/or comparing the works. This may indicate that our user expectations were too high, since we were hoping the submissions would be more extensive and dissimilar. We knew from the beginning that our goals were ambitious, expecting users to go through the five lessons to launch their online exhibition. After going through all of that, it may be unrealistic to expect the students to go back to their notebook to continue to choose, research, and write about additional works of art.

In the spring of 2001, we will evaluate the use of the site to determine what further enhancements should be made. We will review a wide range of issues: long-term solutions for the technical problems, analysis of the quality of the exhibition submissions, limitations of the research section, and whether or not we should provide more information about the works of art from our collection that are on the site for users to select. Important to this discussion is what amount of museum resources is available to further market, maintain, and enhance the site.

Conclusion

The Seattle Art Museum staff working on this project learned several invaluable lessons. First, we learned that the organization of a complex Web site has to come from the Web site producers in the form of a storyboard, mission statement, and production timeline. Staff with Web expertise understand how a project idea can be best translated into a successful online experience. Second, a level of trust in the Web team is needed from all staff participants in order to do this. Staff members need to trust that their goals and expertise will not be lost or misinterpreted through the Web development process. This trust is built when all project participants gain an understanding of how the Web works. Also, positive working relationships among staff can be further established if all participants on a project have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are kept informed. Third, effective project coordination and communication is difficult to implement with new initiatives such as the *My Art Gallery* Web site, but it is one of the most important factors in its success. We encountered many stumbling blocks in this area, but came out of it with clear communication models that we are now using, making current Web site projects much easier.

Interestingly, the Web site ignited many of the contentious issues raised as a result of the *Growing Up with Art* project. This project sparked discussion within the institution about the role of the curator in a museum and whether a sixth-grader could be a substitute for a real curator. Our efforts to highlight this experience and put it on the web, in a very public format, brought this issue back into the spotlight.

The management challenges of a Web project with this level of complexity seemed daunting at times because protocol was lacking within the museum to guide us through the unique issues that arose. Many of these issues demanded attention, and meetings were held to explore and create new guidelines. Some of the questions raised included, Do we need to review the online exhibitions users created? Or is it acceptable to post them automatically to the site? Since this was a project of complex collaboration across museum departments, who was ultimately responsible for it? The meetings convened to answer these questions resulted in innovative problem solving, but also led to more questions that we are confident will be answered over time. Eventually, we started to see *My Art Gallery* as one pioneering answer to meeting the museum's important initiatives and as an exciting pilot project to lay groundwork for future Web projects.

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